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ABSTRACT

The guide is written for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and bilingual education specialists, classroom teachers, building administrators, and parents. It outlines the vision of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) for the effective education of elementary and secondary school ESL students, and presents a framework for using TESOL standards in educational programs. It begins by explaining why ESL standards are needed and some myths about second language learning. It then outlines TESOL's vision of effective education for all students, and a number of general principles of language learning. It concludes by presenting the standards framework for ESL education in the form of three broad goals (use of English to communicate in social settings, use of English to achieve academically in all content areas, and use of English in socially and culturally appropriate ways), and within each goal, three more specific performance standards. (MSE)

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Promising Futures

ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students

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Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

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Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.
1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300
Alexandria, Virginia 22314 USA
Tel. 703-836-0774 Fax 703-836-7864

Director of Communications and Marketing: Helen Kornblum
Project Committee: Nancy Cloud, Fred Genesee, Else Hamayan,
Sarah Hudelson, Denise Murray, Jean Ramirez, and Deborah Short.
Cover and Layout: Ann Kammerer

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Preface

With this issue, TESOL launches the publication of a new periodical series: TESOL Professional Papers. The documents to be published in this series will include articles, position papers, and state-of-the-art reviews that have been commissioned by the Board of Directors to guide it in its decision making and policy development. The Board of Directors has undertaken to disseminate this material more widely through the series because much of the information contained in these reports is of general interest and relevance to other members of TESOL and the profession at large. Papers will be published on a periodic basis as they are commissioned and received by the Board of Directors, and the range of issues and topics covered by the Papers will vary widely, reflecting whatever is of current interest and importance to TESOL's development and that of its members. The Papers do not necessarily reflect the position of the Board. Nor are they the last word on the theme or issue being reviewed. Rather, they are intended to inform and provoke serious thought and discussion among members of the TESOL community and the profession.

Promising Futures: ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students in the U.S. was prepared by a Task Force established by President Fred Geneese in September 1994 as part of the Board of Directors' K-12 Initiative. The Task Force was chaired by Else Hamayan (Illinois Resource Center) and included Nancy Cloud (Hofstra University); Sarah Hudelson (Arizona State University); Jean Ramirez (San Francisco Unified School District), and Deborah Short (Center for Applied Linguistics). The Task Force benefited from contributions from Denise Murray, a member of

TESOL's Board of Directors. The work of the Pre-K-12 Task Force on Standards reflects the best of TESOL's volunteer spirit and professional competence.

Promising Futures is a guide for ESL and bilingual specialists, classroom teachers, building administrators, parents, and all other educational professionals who are involved in the education of these students. It lays out TESOL's vision of effective education for pre-K-12 ESOL students in the U.S. and presents a framework for using ESL standards in educational programs for these learners. It also lays out the English language skills that ESOL students need to become fully proficient in English, to have full access to grade-appropriate instruction in challenging academic subjects, and to lead successful adult lives. A full description and discussion of the standards identified briefly in this Paper will be provided in a companion document.

It is fitting that the debut of TESOL Professional Papers focuses on an issue of such importance to young ESOL learners who themselves are in the formative years of their education. The vision of effective education for ESOL students contained in this TESOL Professional Paper, along with the standards that are an integral part of this vision, challenge all educational professionals in their efforts on behalf of ESOL students. *Promising Futures* is the beginning of what will undoubtedly be an extended and intensive reflection by responsible educators on appropriate standards for ESOL learners and the most effective educational means for achieving those standards.

Fred Genesee
TESOL President, 1994-1995

Promising Futures

ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students

All elementary and secondary school students currently in the U.S. will be living in and contributing to an increasingly diverse society and an increasingly interdependent community of nations in the twenty-first century. To realize their personal, social, and long-term career goals, individuals will need to be able to communicate with others skillfully, appropriately, and effectively. The challenge of contemporary education is to prepare *all* students for life in this new world, including those learners who enter schools with a language other than English. The purpose of this document is to identify the English as a second language (ESL) standards and their role in meeting this challenge.

Note: In this document we use two acronyms, ESL and ESOL. ESL refers to the field of English as a second language and to the standards themselves. ESOL (English speakers of other languages) refers to the learners who are not native speakers of English.

Why ESL Standards Are Needed

Linguistic and cultural diversity is increasing in schools and communities throughout the U.S. Every year, more and more students who speak languages other than English and who come from homes and communities with diverse histories, traditions, world views, and educational experiences, populate classrooms in urban, suburban, and rural settings. The number of school-age children and youth who speak languages other than English at home increased by 68.6% in the past 10 years. By 1993, English language learners in U.S. public schools numbered more

than 2.5 million. Current projections estimate that by the year 2000 the majority of the school-age population in 50 or more major American cities will be from language minority backgrounds.

There is tremendous variety in this student population. Some of these students are recent immigrants, brought to the U.S. by families seeking refuge from political repression or persecution and/or economic opportunity. Others are members of ethnolinguistic groups who have lived on this continent for generations, some for longer than the U.S. has existed as a nation. Some have had prior education, including literacy, in their native languages. Others have had limited formal schooling. Some have had normal developmental histories, while others have identified disabilities that challenge their learning. Our primary concerns in this document are with students in elementary and secondary schools who are not native speakers of English, and whom we refer to as ESOL students and learners.

The standards described in this document specify the language skills ESOL students in elementary and secondary schools need to become fully proficient in English, to have unrestricted access to grade-appropriate instruction in challenging academic subjects, and ultimately to lead rich and productive lives. The development of these standards has been informed by the work of other national standards groups, particularly by the English language arts and foreign language standards. All three language standards projects share an emphasis on the importance of:

1. language as communication
2. language learning through meaningful and significant use
3. the individual and societal value of bi- and multilingualism
4. the role of ESOL students' native languages in their English language and general academic development
5. cultural, social, and cognitive processes in language and academic development
6. assessment that respects language and cultural diversity

ESL standards do not and cannot stand alone, however. ESL standards provide the bridge to general education standards expected of all students in the U.S. Other professional organizations and groups have

developed standards that are world-class, important, developmentally appropriate, and useful. These standards mandate high levels of achievement in content learning for all learners, including ESOL students. But the content standards do not provide educators the directions and strategies they need to assist ESOL learners to attain these standards because they assume student understanding of and ability to use English to engage with content. The content standards do not acknowledge the central role of language in the achievement of content. Nor do they highlight the learning styles and particular instructional and assessment needs of learners who are still developing proficiency in English. In sum, the content standards do not address the specific needs of ESOL students who are adding English to their home languages. Therefore, ESOL learners need an additional set of standards.

The ESL standards recognize that upon entry to school ESOL students must acquire an additional language and culture and learn the English language skills that are characteristic of native English speakers of the same age and, most importantly, fundamental to the full attainment of English language arts and other content standards. Thus the ESL standards articulate the special developmental English language needs of ESOL learners and explicate the special considerations that must be given to ESOL students if they are to achieve the English abilities necessary to attain the standards of the other fields. The ESL standards highlight special instructional and assessment considerations that must be given to ESOL learners if they are to benefit from and achieve the high standards proposed for other subjects. Thus, ESL standards are important because they:

- articulate the specific developmental needs of ESOL learners
- provide directions to educators on how to meet the needs of ESOL learners
- emphasize the central role of language in the attainment of other standards

Myths About Second Language Learning

Several myths regarding second language learning prevail both among many lay persons and some educational professionals and policy makers. One intent of this document is to refute these myths.

Myth 1: ESOL students learn English easily and quickly simply by being exposed to and surrounded by native English speakers.

Fact: Learning a second language takes time and significant intellectual effort on the part of the learner. Learning a second language is hard work; learners do not simply "pick up" the language.

Myth 2: When ESOL learners are able to converse comfortably in English, they have developed proficiency in the language.

Fact: Research has shown that it can take 6 to 9 years for ESOL students to achieve the same levels of proficiency in academic English as native speakers. Research also shows that ESOL students participating in thoughtfully designed programs of bilingual or sheltered content instruction remain in school longer and attain significantly higher rates of academic achievement in comparison to students without such advantages.

Myth 3: In earlier times immigrant children learned English rapidly and assimilated easily into American life.

Fact: Many immigrant students during the early part of this century did not learn English quickly or well. Many dropped out of school to work in jobs that did not require the kinds of academic achievement and communication skills that substantive employment opportunities today require.

TESOL's Vision of Effective Education For All Students

The role of ESL standards can only be fully understood in the broader context of education for ESOL students. Therefore, before presenting the ESL standards, it is important to describe our overarching vision of effective education.

In TESOL's vision:

Effective education for ESOL students includes nativelike levels of proficiency in English.

For ESOL students to be successful in school, and ultimately in the world outside school, they must be able to use English to accomplish their academic, personal, and social goals with the same proficiency as native speakers of English. In school environments, ESOL students need to be able to use spoken and written English both to acquire academic content and to demonstrate their learning. ESOL learners also need to be able to follow routine classroom instructions given in English and understand and use appropriate communication patterns so that they will be able to be successful learners in academic environments. Finally, ESOL learners need to use English to function effectively in social settings outside the school, as well as in academic settings. The ESL standards in this document are concerned with these types of social and academic skills. Moreover, appropriate performance and assessment standards that distinguish between language and academic achievement are also required if ESOL students are to be given full credit for mastery of academic content while acquiring English.

Effective education for ESOL students includes the maintenance and promotion of ESOL students' native languages in school and community contexts.

By definition, ESOL learners already know and use another language. Research indicates that both the academic achievement and the school completion of ESOL learners is significantly enhanced when they are able to use their native languages to learn in school. Research also

shows that full proficiency in the native language (including literacy) facilitates second language development. Developing and using ESOL students' native languages also serves U.S. national interests because it increases the linguistic and cultural resources available as the U.S. competes in the global economy. Bilingualism is an asset whose value for the individual and for society can only increase as the U.S. role in the global market place expands in the next century.

All educational personnel assume responsibility for the education of ESOL students.

The attainment of challenging, world-class educational standards by all students is only possible if schools design their educational missions with ESOL students, as well as others, in mind. Comprehensive education calls for shared responsibility by all educational professionals working with ESOL students. It also calls for professionals to expand their knowledge to encompass issues of relevance to the education of ESOL students. This expanded knowledge base includes an understanding of similarities and differences in first and second language acquisition; the role of the native language in second language and content learning; instructional methods and strategies that facilitate both English language and content learning; instructional practices that accommodate individual differences in learning styles; the interrelationships between culture, cognition, and academic achievement; alternative approaches to assessment; and the importance of community-school linkages in education. These are all part of the professional development of ESL specialists that general educators must tap into if educational reform is to result in the attainment of high standards by all students.

Effective education also calls for comprehensive provision of first-rate services and full access to those services by all students.

Quality educational experiences and services must be made fully accessible to all ESOL students. These include, among others, comprehensive and challenging curricula, access to the full range of curricula (e.g., gifted classes, laboratory sciences, college preparatory courses), safe

and well-equipped classrooms, appropriate assessment measures, inclusion in extracurricular activities, fully and appropriately certified teachers, and other educational specialists and resources. Surveys indicate, however, that this is often not the case in most schools. To have quality programs and to serve ESOL students appropriately on their way to full mastery of English, instruction must take into account the different entry-level abilities in English that ESOL learners have. Some learners come to school with oral and written skills; others do not. In addition, where necessary, programs should provide some instruction in the native languages of ESOL students. TESOL's Access Brochure provides a description of the conditions needed to provide ESOL students with equitable opportunities to learn (see Appendix).

Knowledge of more than one language and culture is advantageous for all students.

Internationalism is the hallmark of modern U.S. education and of the education reform movement, and linguistic and cultural diversity are the hallmarks of internationalism. The challenge of contemporary education is to contribute to students' abilities to live in increasingly diverse local communities and an ever-shrinking world community. Effective education for the twenty-first century must provide firsthand opportunities for students to learn about the cultural diversity around them and to learn world languages. Cross-cultural competence can be fostered by meaningful and long-term interactions with others with different world views, life experiences, languages, and cultures. Language learning can be fostered by interactions with native speakers. This means that, not only should ESOL students learn about the U.S. from native English speakers, but native-English-speaking students, teachers, administrators, and school staff should learn about the world and foreign languages from ESOL students, their families, and their communities.

Audience

This document is written for educators who work with ESOL learners. First, it is intended for educators who work directly with ESOL students at elementary, middle, and secondary school levels. This includes

designated ESL teachers (whether in resource or self-contained settings), bilingual teachers who work with ESOL students in their native languages and English, and teachers who work with ESOL students with special needs and talents. Another audience for the standards is content area teachers who teach ESOL students. If ESOL students are to have full access to challenging curricula and to achieve to the same high level in the content areas as native English speakers, then content area specialists must become aware of the importance of language in relationship to their disciplines so that they can better facilitate the academic achievement of their ESOL students.

This document is also intended for educators such as counselors, school social workers, and psychologists who provide additional service to ESOL students and for professionals whose activities and decisions affect programs for ESOL students, that is, building administrators, pre-service and inservice teacher educators, and local, state, and national policy makers. Finally, this document is intended for parents and communities with ESOL learners so that they may better understand what constitutes appropriate and effective education for their children.

General Principles of Language Acquisition

A number of general principles derived from current research and theory about the nature of language, language learning, human development, and pedagogy, underlie the ESL standards described in this document. These principles are described briefly here.

Language is functional

Both oral and written language, in first and second language settings, is primarily a means of communication used by people in multiple and varied social contexts to express themselves, interact with others, learn about the world, and meet their individual and collective needs. Successful language learning and language teaching emphasize the goal of functional proficiency. This is a departure from traditional pedagogical approaches that view language learning and teaching primarily as mastery of the elements of language, such as grammar and vocabulary, without reference to their functional usefulness. *Therefore, what is most*

important for ESOL learners is to function effectively in English and through English while learning challenging academic content.

Language varies

Language, oral and written, is not monolithic; it comes in different varieties. Language varies according to person, topic, purpose, and situation. Everyone is proficient in more than one of these social varieties of their native language. Language also varies with respect to regional, social class, and ethnic group differences. Such language varieties are characterized by distinctive structural and functional characteristics, and they constitute legitimate and functional systems of communication within their respective sociocultural niches. Additionally, language varies from one academic domain to another—the language of mathematics is different from the language of social studies. As competent language users, ESOL students already use their own language varieties. They must also learn the oral and written language varieties used in schools and in the community in large. *What is most important for ESOL learners is to function effectively in academic environments, while retaining their own native language varieties.*

Language learning is cultural learning

Patterns of language usage vary across cultures and reflect differences in values, norms, and beliefs about social roles and relationships in each culture. When children learn their first language, they learn the cultural values, norms, and beliefs that are characteristic of their cultures. To learn another language is to learn new norms, behaviors, and beliefs that are appropriate in the new culture, and thus to extend one's sociocultural competence to new environments. To add a new language, therefore, is to add a new culture. Learning a new language and culture also provides insights into one's own language and culture. This is important for ESOL students because general education in U.S. schools reflects the cultural backgrounds of majority-group native-English-speaking students. If ESOL students are to attain the same high standards as native-English-speaking students from the majority group, educational programs must be based on acknowledgment of, understanding of, respect

for, and valuing of diverse cultural backgrounds. What is important for all language learners is to develop attitudes of additive bilingualism and biculturalism.

Language acquisition occurs through meaningful use and interaction

Research in first and second language acquisition indicates that language is learned most effectively when it is used in significant and meaningful situations as learners interact with others (some of whom should be more proficient than the learners are) to accomplish their purposes. Language acquisition takes place as learners engage in activities of a primarily social nature with opportunities to map linguistic forms onto important social/communicative functions. At the same time, it takes place in activities that are primarily of a cognitive or intellectual nature that provide learners with opportunities to become skilled in using language for reasoning and mastery of challenging new information. *This means that ESOL learners must have multiple opportunities to use English, to interact with others as they study meaningful and intellectually challenging content, and to receive feedback on their language use.*

Language processes develop interdependently

Traditional distinctions between the processes of reading, listening, writing, and speaking, and conceptualizations of language acquisition as linear (with listening preceding speaking, and speaking preceding reading) are artificial. Authentic language often entails the simultaneous use of different language modalities, and acquisition of functional language abilities occurs simultaneously and interdependently, rather than sequentially. Thus, for example, depending on the age of the learner, reading activities may activate the development of speaking abilities, or vice versa. Additionally, listening, speaking, reading, and writing develop as learners engage with and through different technologies, such as computers, music, film, and video. *This means that ESOL learners need learning environments that provide demonstrations of the interdependence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They also need to develop all of their language abilities through the use of varied technologies.*

Native language proficiency contributes to second language acquisition

Because by definition, ESOL students know and use at least one other language, they have acquired an intuitive understanding of the general structural and functional characteristics of language. They bring this knowledge to the task of second language learning. Some ESOL students also come to the task of learning English and learning content through English already literate in their native languages. These learners know what it means to be literate—they know that they can use written forms of language to learn more about the world, to convey information and receive information from others, to establish and maintain relationships with others, and to explore the perspectives of others. Research has shown that literacy in the native language correlates positively with the acquisition of literacy in a second language. In addition, academic instruction that includes the use of ESOL students' native languages, especially if they are literate in that language, promotes learners' academic achievement while they are acquiring the English needed to benefit fully from instruction through English. Native language literacy abilities can assist ESOL students in English-medium classrooms to construct meaning from academic materials and experiences in English. And in learning a new language, students also learn more about their native tongue. *This means that for ESOL learners, the most effective environments for second language teaching and learning are those that promote ESOL students' native language and literacy development as a foundation for English language and academic development.*

Bilingualism is an individual and societal asset

Research has shown that acquisition of two languages simultaneously is a common and normal developmental phenomenon and that acquisition of a second (or third) language can confer certain cognitive and linguistic advantages on the individual. To realize these benefits, however, advanced levels of proficiency in both languages are necessary. Therefore, the most effective educational environments for ESOL learners are those that promote the continued development of learners' primary languages for both academic and social purposes. In addition, as noted earlier, bilingual proficiency enhances employment possibilities in

the international marketplace and enhances the competitive strength of U.S. industry and business worldwide. *This means that bilingualism serves the national interest, and schools need to promote the retention and development of multiple languages.*

Standards Framework

The ESL standards framework has been constructed in the following way. It begins with three broad goals for ESOL learners at all age levels, goals that include personal, social, and academic uses of English. Each goal is explained and is followed by a description of the content standards associated with it. Each standard is explained with several statements that specify what is the standard's intent. Sample progress indicators (SPIs) have been included to provide additional explication of what students should be able to do with respect to specific standards. These have been organized by grade-level clusters. Additionally, because ESL students enter school at varied levels of ESL and native language proficiency, the SPIs represent three proficiency levels of English (beginning, intermediate, advanced), and they also take into account students with limited formal schooling in the native language. Vignettes have been crafted for grade- and proficiency-level clusters. These vignettes demonstrate specific classroom activities that support attainment of the standards. Each vignette is followed by a discussion that relates the standard and the progress indicators to the vignette.

Goal 1: To use English to communicate in social settings.

A primary goal of ESL instruction is to assist students in communicating effectively in English, both in and out of school. Such communication is vital if ESOL learners are to avoid the negative social and economic consequences of low proficiency in English and are to participate as informed participants in our democracy. Our schools need to ensure that all students achieve the English language competence needed for academic success and for life in a literate culture. ESOL learners also need to see that there are personal rewards to be gained from communicating effectively in English.

Standards for Goal 1

Students will:

1. use English to participate in social interaction.
2. interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment.
3. use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence.

Goal 2: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas.

The expectations for ESOL learners in U.S. schools are high. They are expected to be able to learn academic content through the English language and to compete academically with native-English-speaking students. This requires that learners use spoken and written English in their schoolwork.

Standards for Goal 2

Students will:

1. use English to interact in the classroom.
2. use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form.
3. use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge.

Goal 3: To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

ESOL students in our schools today come into contact with peers and adults who are different from them, linguistically and culturally. The diversity in U.S. schools mirrors the diversity in this country and around the world that young people will encounter as they move into the twenty-first century world of work. In order to work and live amid diversity, students need to be able to understand and appreciate people who are different and communicate effectively with them. Communicating effectively also means having the ability to interact in multiple social settings.

Standards for Goal 3

Students will:

1. choose appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting.
2. vary nonverbal communication according to audience, purpose, and setting.
3. use appropriate learning strategies to extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence.

Conclusion

Full proficiency in English is critical for the long-term economic, social, and personal development of *all* students in the U.S. *Promising Futures* outlines a framework for thinking about and planning language education for ESOL students and for interpreting and making use of the ESL standards that will appear in a companion document. The ESL standards contained in that document describe the proficiencies in English that ESOL students need to acquire so they can attain the same high-level standards in other content domains, including English language arts, as fully proficient English-speaking students. Thus, *Promising Futures* is the starting point for developing effective and equitable education for ESOL students.

Planning effective English language instruction for ESOL cannot be done in isolation. It must be part of a comprehensive and challenging educational program that takes into account ESOL students' social, educational, and personal backgrounds as well as their existing skills and knowledge bases. It must understand and respond appropriately to the interrelationships between language, academic, and sociocultural development. The linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies that ESOL students bring to school are a solid base for building their future, in terms of educational and career success. Only if ESL instruction is part of a comprehensive, challenging, and enriching educational program, however, will the promising futures of ESOL learners be realized.



Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.
1600 Cameron St., Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA
Tel. 703-836-0774 • Fax 703-836-7864 • E-mail tesol@tesol.edu